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WESTERN ANIMATED MOVIES AND THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF CHILDHOOD IN PAKISTAN: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL IMPERIALISM AND PERCEIVED CULTURAL CHANGE

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Abstract
The global media's use has become more ubiquitous and has been greatly transforming kids' entertainment and culture around the world. Western animated movies, particularly the Disney princess movies, have become ex tremely popular in Pakistan's kid's amusement field and have been a cause of concern regarding its effect on language, conduct and culture. The present study is based on the theories of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Cultural Imperialism Theory and analyzes the effect that western animated films are having on Pakistani children. The study scales a mixed-method approach which includes the data of questionnaires filled by 100 parents and teachers of private schools in Lahore, Pakistan for the year 2024-2025. In particular, the primary culture narratives and the ideology they embody in selected Disney movies: Cinderella, The Little Mermaid, Tangled, Frozen, and Moana will be analyzed. The results indicate that children consider animated movies as an effective influence on their selection of language, fashion, social behavior and cultural aspirations. The participants stated that they had reservations about the use of English language and western culture in the growing preference of children to watch such films, but on the other hand, they perceived the education and language advantage that accrues from watching such films. The findings also reveal that western animated films have certain conceptions of beauty that can help reshape the local cultural identity over time, conceptions of individuality, freedom and modernity. The research is based on the concept of cultural imperialism and shows that the global media products are means of communicating the dominant cultural ideologies that influence the perceptions and practices of the local community.The concept of cultural imperialism is used to study the global media products as a medium of disseminating dominant cultural ideologies which have an effect on local perceptions and practices. The study is a good contribution in the field of existing literature on media discourse, childhood studies and cultural globalization in Pakistan. This study employs critical discourse analysis as a research method, with the aim of examining the Western animated movies in the context of children's culture in Pakistan, particularly the Disney animated princess films.The research methodology used in this study is critical discourse analysis which aims at the study of the western animated movies in the context of children's culture in Pakistan, especially the Disney animated princess films.

Introduction
Today, the world is defined by the unprecedented circulation of information, images and cultural products across national borders. Since the advent of new technologies such as internet, satellite and online television, children are able to receive entertainment content produced outside their own cultural reach and context (Tomlinson, 1999; Thussu, 2007). Out of these types of media, western animated films are given a huge position since they are very popular in the globe and accessible to all. The Disney movies are especially a part of childhood experiences in various societies, including Pakistan. Film and television programmes have never been simply about entertainment but have also been technologies of meaning, value, and ideology production, or technologies of cultural text (Hall, 1997; Kellner, 1995). The influence of animated movies is particularly strong because they use colors, characters that are liked to children and emotionally engaging stories. Fictional characters can also become prototypes for young viewers, and they can mimic the speech, actions, dress and attitudes of fictional characters as well as their real-life counterparts (Bandura, 1977; Buckingham, 2003). Thus, children's access to the global media poses significant issues related to cultural identity, language use and the maintenance of local cultural traditions. Pakistan is a unique case to study these issues. Pakistani society is very religious, linguistic and cultural. As the exposure to the

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products of the world is also increasing rapidly. With the penetration of cable television, internet, and digital media, Western media has become a part of the lives of Pakistanis families (Rahman, 1996; Thussu, 2007). As a result, there has been a growing concern about the extent of foreign media impact on children's behavior and the extent to which foreign media has led to changes in social values and practices. This growing Disney-princess craze has sparked debates amongst parents, educators, and media scientists regarding the effect of these films on Pakistani children. Such films may depict specific ideas of beauty, individual self-expression, love, and self-discovery that may not align with the local cultural norms (England et al., 2011; Towbin et al., 2004). There are often princess characters portrayed as autonomous beings that pursue personal desires and defy traditional boundaries. These images can expose children to other cultures and shape their sense of self, family and social norms. Meanwhile, animated films also have educational and language values. Many parents and teachers recognise that children can learn new words, learn to say words more clearly, and learn to think creatively from watching films that have animation (Singer & Singer, 2001; Strasburger et al., 2014). Thus, the impact of Western media on the Pakistani children cannot be termed as solely negative or positive. Rather, it involves a complex process of negotiation between global cultural products and local cultural realities. This study takes the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in tackling this problem. CDA recognizes language and media representations as social practices that are interrelated with relations of power and ideology (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Fairclough (1995) suggests discourse is integral to the development of social identities, social relationships and systems of knowledge and belief. Likewise, Van Dijk (1998) claims that discourse is an important factor in the reproduction of social ideologies and power relations. These viewpoints consider animated movies as texts that do consume in the process of constructing children's world views. The study also relies on the Cultural Imperialism Theory which posits that in order to colonise less powerful societies, powerful societies project their influence through cultural products and media systems. Schiller (1976) contended that worldwide media industries spread dominant cultural norms and lifestyles, with a tendency to marginalise local cultures and identities. Western animated films from this viewpoint can be seen as agents of cultural transmission that help to foster specific ideologies about language, consumption, gender and social relations (Tomlinson, 1991). Developing issues of cultural imperialism go hand in hand with a debate on language and identity in the Pakistani context. English has a high social value and is linked to education, modernity and socioeconomic development (Rahman, 1996; Phillipson, 1992). Children's access to English language media therefore can have a negative effect on their language preferences as well as their sense of social status and cultural belonging. The global media and local culture are further illustrated through the increasing use of western themes in children's birthday parties, clothing and children's recreational activities. Although animation films are becoming popular in Pakistan, there is little research that has considered animation films from a critical discourse perspective. Previous research has tended to concentrate on the effects of media and on behaviour, with little attention paid to the ideological aspects of children's entertainment (Buckingham, 2003; Strasburger et al., 2014). Furthermore, it is important to recognize how parents and teachers simultaneously situate the impact of western media and to understand what issues their perceptions of the impact of western media entail with respect to cultural change and the preservation of identity. Hence, the aim of the present study was to investigate the discursive construction of Western animated films and the impact on Pakistani children. The study intends to use Critical Discourse Analysis along with Cultural Imperialism Theory to interpret the representation of cultural identity and social values in the world's media discourses in the current context of Pakistan.

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Literature Review

Media and Children socialization

Media has an influence on children's socialization. In today's societies, the media is one of the most powerful socialisation agents. It was believed that values and social norms are mainly passed on to children by three major institutions: family, school, and religion. The world of television, digital technology and online streaming, however, has greatly altered the socialisation of childhood (Buckingham, 2003; Rideout et al. 2010). Much of the time that children are spending with media is impacting their attitudes, beliefs and behaviour. Since time immemorial, researchers have maintained that children's media exposure transcends the entertainment value. Young people are exposed to specific lifestyles, languages, ideologies and cultural practices through television programmes and films which will have an impact on how they see the social world (Kellner, 1995; Hall, 1997). Social Learning Theory (Bandura 1977) states that children imitate and observe behaviour. In movies, characters can serve as role models for young viewers to emulate in their own lives, in terms of their behaviors, their speech, and their attitudes (Singer & Singer, 2001). Animated films have an important and special meaning because they are able to combine visually moving pictures, interesting stories and emotional characters. Children often experience identification with fictional characters and assimilation of values and behaviors from fictional characters. This means animated films can be used to provide important information about relationships, morality, gender and culture to children (Strasburger et al., 2014).

Globalization and cultural flows

The spread of globalization brought about by technological growth and transnational media networks has allowed unprecedented trans-cultural communications (Appadurai, 1996; Tomlinson, 1999). Audiences around the world consume media products created in a different place and context. The phenomenon has resulted in the development of a worldwide media culture in which cultural products have become global and are integrated into daily life in various societies. The process of globalization of the media has created both hope and worry. Others view the world media as a source of expanding cultural perspectives and intercultural understanding. Others argue that the dominance of western media industries leads to cultural homogenization and challenges local traditions and cultures (Schiller, 1976; Thussu, 2007).

Western Animated Movies and Cultural Representation

Animated films can be seen as insignificant children's leisure. However, the interpretation of these films as carrying messages of ideology and cultural assumptions that influence viewers' ideas of society and identity has become more common among scholars (Giroux, 1999; Hall, 1997). The global success of Disney products, as well as their use in building narratives of gender, family and social relations have received some significant academic interest. Older Disney movies like Cinderella featured female characters as gentle, passive and relying on romantic fulfillment. More recently, Frozen and Moana have relatively free-spirited and independent female protagonists that question norms. (England et al., 2011). Despite these transformations, researchers insist that Disney movies still spread certain cultural messages about beauty, individuality, consumption, and self-actualisation (Towbin et al., 2004). These representations gain new meaning when eaten in non-western societies. The values reinforced in films designed to be animated could conflict with local cultural values and help shape other aspirations and identities in the lives of children. Hence, animated films develop into location where global and local cultures interact, negotiate meaning, and sometimes clash (Tomlinson, 1999).

Language, Identity, and Media Consumption

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Language is closely connected with culture and identity. Children's language attitudes and linguistic preferences are significantly affected by media exposure (Crystal, 2003). Exposure to media in English has been found to increase vocabulary learning, pronunciation patterns and positive attitudes toward English (Singer & Singer, 2001). In many post-colonial societies, such as Pakistan, English has a high status in society and it is identified with education, economic mobility and modernity (Rahman, 1996). This in turn can have a strong influence on children's preference for English language over indigenous languages in the use of animated films. With the rise in the use of English expressions by children and the increasing popularity of western cultural practices by urban families, there has long been debate over cultural preservation and identity. Others have suggested that changes in language in the media reflect the natural effects of globalization, while others attribute them to cultural dominance and symbolic power (Phillipson, 1992; Norton, 2013). Pakistan's media industry, ideology and cultural transformation.

Media, Ideology and Cultural Change in Pakistan

Access to foreign media content has gone significantly up in Pakistan in the last 20 years. Children now have a greater access to western entertainment programs and films through satellite television, streaming platforms and social media (Thussu, 2007). This exposure has led to a lot of discussion among educators and parents on how foreign media affects the behavior of children and their orientation in culture. The previous studies in Pakistan have found that parents feel that western media have an impact on children's dressing style, language and recreation (Rahman, 1996). Meanwhile, the respondents confirm the learning value of animated programs and their role in language learning and creativity (Strasburger et al., 2014). These seemingly contradictory perceptions will suggest that there is not only good but bad in media influence. But rather it is a complex process that involves local communities in negotiating the opportunities and problems of globalization and cultural contact (Tomlinson, 1999).

Theoretical Framework

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a transdisciplinary research method, was born as a result of research into the connection between language, power and ideology (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). As opposed to conventional linguistic views, which are mostly oriented towards the description of language structures, CDA aims to account for how discourse helps to produce and reproduce social inequalities and systems of domination. Fairclough (1995) views discourse as a social practice and suggests analysing discourse in three dimensions – text, discursive practice and social practice. Textual analysis deals with the choices and representations of language, discursive practice is about the creation and understanding of texts, and social practice refers to larger structures of social and even ideological meanings. In the realm of animated films, CDA helps researchers to analyze the narrative and character construction of meaning about gender, family, culture and identity. The method also allows for an understanding of audience meaning-making processes and the links between them and wider social issues on cultural change. The socio-cognitive approach of Van Dijk (1998) also stresses discourse as a factor that influences mental models and ideology beliefs. Van Dijk (1998) states that repeated exposure to specific discourses helps to create collective social representations, which shape people's perceptions of reality. Parent and teacher anxiety around the Western media are conceptualized as discourses, which embody specific views about childhood, culture and identity in the present study.

Cultural Imperialism Theory

The theory of Cultural Imperialism is an important one for the analysis of the circulation of media products and how they can impact local cultures. As a way of spreading specific values,

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ideologies, and lifestyles, economically strong countries use cultural industries and communication systems to exert influence, according to Schiller (1976). The theory indicates that the global hegemony of the western media could lead to the marginalization of local cultural tradition and to cultural dependency (Tomlinson 1991). Cultural imperialism is a not only political or economic power, but it is also a symbolic influence and a normalizing of thought and manner. The Disney films are a fine case in point of global cultural products reaching across various societies. In their stories and images, these movies can often convey values of personal autonomy, romantic satisfaction, self-expression, and consumerism (Giroux, 1999). In non-Western societies, these stories, when eaten in large quantities by children, can shape notions of identity and engender cultural change.

Integrating CDA and Cultural Imperialism

In the present study, Critical Discourse Analysis and Cultural Imperialism theory are employed to analyze media texts and perceptions of media audiences. CDA offers the analytical framework for the detection of the ideological assumptions behind the animated films and participants' reactions to them, while Cultural Imperialism Theory discusses the global power relations which allow Western media products to exert cultural influence in the societies like Pakistan. In this integrated model, Western animated film is not only considered an entertainment product, but also as a cultural text that plays a role in building meaning in terms of language, identity and social values. In a similar way, the views of parents and teachers are seen as discursive reactions to the larger processes of globalization and cultural change (Fairclough, 2003; Van Dijk, 1998).

Methodology

Research Design

The mixed method research design, which combines quantitative and qualitative methods, was used in the present study to explore the perceived influence of western animated movies on Pakistani children. Mixed method research is a combination of numerical trends and qualitative interpretations that can provide researchers with a full picture of social phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which aim to examine the relation between discourse, ideology and power (Fairclough, 1995) guided the study. The mixed-method approach allowed the researcher to explore measurable perceptions and the underlying discourses about media influence and cultural change.

Population and Sample

The study was carried out within Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan in 2024-2025. The target population were parents and teachers affiliated with private schools. A purposive sampling technique was used, as the participants were believed to be able to give informed views and opinions on children's consumption and behavioural patterns to media (Dörnyei, 2007). A sample of 100 respondents (50 parents and 50 teachers) from different private educational institutions was used.

Data Collection Instruments

A structured questionnaire was prepared to examine participants' perceptions about the effect of Western animated films on children's language, behavior and culture. It was both closed and open-ended questionnaire. In the qualitative part, five Disney princess movies were chosen:

• Cinderella (1950) •
The Little Mermaid (1989) •
Tangled (2010) •
Frozen (2013) •
Moana (2016)

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These films have been chosen due to their popularity worldwide and their high consumption rate amongst children. Furthermore, they are a range of Disney productions, reflecting changing notions of femininity, family and personal identity (England et al., 2011).

Analytical Framework

Fairclough's (1995) model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used in this study which consists of three dimensions.The study used Fairclough's (1995) three dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Textual Analysis:

The narratives, dialogues, and visual analysis of selected animated movies were featured in this stage.

Discursive Practice:

The second dimension investigated the meaning of animated film effects and how the meaning was connected to the social issues of upbringing and cultural identity of children.

Social Practice:

The third dimension situated the findings within the larger context of globalization and cultural imperialism. The quantitative data was analysed by descriptive statistics and the qualitative data was analysed by thematic analysis.

Findings and Discussion

Western Media as a Vehicle of Cultural Transmission

Many participants felt that western animated films have an impact on children's behaviour and culture. Children's dialogue, dress and mannerisms were often reported by parents and teachers in their work as imitations. This is in line with Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) suggesting that children learn behaviours through observation and imitation. In the context of Cultural Imperialism Theory, these findings indicate that animated films are not only a product aimed at entertaining viewers, but also a vehicle for culture (Schiller, 1976). Within the Disney films, the values that are being promoted are values of western modernity: individual freedom, personal choice and self-expression (Tomlinson, 1991). For instance, in the movie, Moana is the main character, and she is portrayed as an individual who defies stereotypes and works towards their own goals. In a similar vein, Frozen is about self-discovery and personal agency. The stories are a contrast to traditional collectivist values which focus on an emphasis of obedience, family authority and communal responsibilities.

Constructing "idealized" identities and lifestyles

The movies are chosen to portray specific ideas of beauty and success. Female roles are predominantly depicted as being physically attractive, adventurous, strong and self-assured, and finding personal fulfilment. Cinderella thinks of happiness as a transformation and social advancement, while in The Little Mermaid, the embodiment of personal desire is one of the key aims of life. The later works of Tangled and Frozen focus on self-actualization and personal freedom (England et al., 2011). These stories are not neutral, from a CDA point of view. They develop specific notions of femininity, happiness and success which can influence children's hopes and expectations (Fairclough, 1995; Hall, 1997).

The Prestige of English and the Politics of Language

The majority of participants admitted that western animated films have positive effects on children's pronunciation and vocabulary in English. However, there were concerns that these benefits would come with the use of the growing preference for English and decreasing use of indigenous languages. English is an honourable language in postcolonial societies like Pakistan and is often linked to education, socio-economic mobility and modernity (Rahman, 1996). This may thus help to maintain or strengthen current language hierarchies and to symbolically marginalise local languages (Phillipson, 1992). As CDA sees it, the preference for English is

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not just a linguistic issue, but also an ideological one, as it is a reflection of the broader social values and attitudes regarding status and cultural prestige (Norton, 2013).

Cultural anxiety and the discourse of preservation

The participants' answers showed high concerns about the preservation of culture. A major concern of many parents and teachers was that too much exposure to Western media might have a negative impact on children's association with local traditions and values. These concerns have been voiced in terms of a change in clothing styles, the lack of interest in traditional practices, and the greater desire to emulate Western lifestyle. These understandings are a discourse of cultural anxiety in which globalization might be seen as a threat to local identity (Tomlinson, 1999). Meanwhile, the participants didn't call for the outright rejection of Western media. A large number accepted its didactic and educational aspects and made it a point to show children the other cultures of the world. This contradiction is part of the impact of globalization, which aims to incorporate local communities into the global media, while at the same time trying to maintain cultural traditions.

CDA Interpretation of Participants' Responses

Parental and teacher talk constructs children as an "at risk" cultural minority needing guidance and protection. Children are often depicted as "gaggy-mouths," who copy what they see.Children are often portrayed as "gaggy-mouths" who repeat what they have seen. This image is a reflection of the larger social issues of modernization and cultural transformation. The discourse of protection sets up the parents and teachers as protectors of cultural values, and parents' and teachers' role as controllers of children's media use (Van Dijk, 1998).

Conclusion

The present research was focused upon the impact of the western animated films on the Pakistani children based on the integrated approach of critical discourse analysis and cultural imperialism theory. The results showed that children consider that western animated films play important roles as cultural transmission agents that shape children's language and behavior patterns and cultural preferences. The study shows Disney princess films create specific beauty, individuality, and modernity ideals which can affect children's aspirations and social identities (Giroux, 1999; Hall, 1997). Meanwhile, participants acknowledged the instructional benefits of animated films, especially in the field of English language learning and creativity (Singer & Singer 2001). The results also show that worries about children's media use are linked to general worries about globalization, cultural survival, and linguistic identity (Tomlinson, 1999). Overall, this study points out that media discourse has been seen as crucial in the continuous interaction between global and local cultures in Pakistan.

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